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## **Introduction**

The paper critically discusses policies and practices of adult education (AE) for migrants and their integration in Cyprus in the light of the current state of affairs in Europe. Such an exploration is essential as adult education has traditionally been a central governmental tool, contributing to the adult population's social inclusion as active democratic citizens (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2017, p. 216). Currently, in the island there is a growing number of recently arrived refugees and adult migrants that highlight the need for measures to integrate them in the education system at all levels (European Commission [EC], 2017). At the same time, in the key literature and policy papers on adult education in Cyprus, such as the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, (Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development [DGEPCD], n.d.), the Education and Training Monitor: Cyprus (EC, 2017), the policy paper on the integration of students with migrant background to the Cyprus Educational System (Ministry of Education and Culture [MoEC], 2016) there is a striking absence of any substantial references to adult migrants or to the notions of multiculturalism, intercultural education or the integration of non-native adult learners.

Indeed, this absence corresponds to the observation that, up to 2002, there was essentially no policy engagement with diversity, multiculturalism and integration in the context of the Greek Cypriot education system (Partasi, 2017); it was only in the early 2000s that some academic discussion and research have been developed and the debate about the educational provision and integration of pupils with migrant biographies appeared on the political agenda. From this period onwards, an embryonic legal and policy framework has been developed aiming to promote inclusion policies for migrants and expatriates (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2015). These inclusion policies have also given rise to debates on the introduction of multiculturalism in primary and secondary education and has concomitantly contributed to a growing academic research on the area (Angelides, Stylianou & Leigh, 2003; Angelides, Stylianou & Leigh, 2004; Trimikliniotis, 2004; Hajisoteriou, 2010; Hajisoteriou, Neophytou, & Angelides, 2012; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013, 2015; Partasi, 2017).

Still, these debates and studies have hardly permeated so far, the field of adult education in Cyprus. As this paper argues, adult education for migrants in the island is characterized by a lack of cohesive policies, extensive research and systematized data and statistics. Examining adult education for migrants in Cyprus has particular salience and, in this respect, this article attempts to open up the space for a serious engagement with adult migrant learners as active participants in educational processes. The island's status as a postcolonial state, the civil strife

of the two main communities that will be discussed later on, and the migratory flows of the past decades, have had an amalgamation of socio-cultural and political implications for migrant inclusion attitudes and policies as well as for adult education. Additionally, it is interesting to explore the connection between the adult education policies and practices and the formulation of state's policy towards the education of adult migrants, and the extent to which they are interrelated.

In the paper we attempt to contribute to the above discussion by addressing some crucial questions: Are migrants/refugees, asylum seekers, visible in the context of official texts on adult educational policy? Are they targeted by adult education policies and/or other pilot initiatives? Are migrants targeted by policies on Adult Education in Cyprus? Are there any special provisions for adult migrants in terms of curriculum and pedagogical approaches?

In the following sections, the European policies on adult education and migration are critically discussed, since Cyprus has been an EU member country since 2004, and consequently, EU policies on migration and adult education directly affect Cyprus' national policies in the field; then a critical analysis of the current situation in Cyprus for the education of adults, and the education of adult migrants is attempted. Finally, brief conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made regarding the adoption of new policies and practices for the education of adult migrants in Cyprus in the light of the predominant policies and practices in Europe and elsewhere.

## **European policies on adult education and migration**

### ***Migration in the EU agenda on adult learning***

The European agenda on adult education engages with migration as mainly a socio-economic process, while it primarily addresses migrants living within the EU. Migrants living in EU states are primarily designated as one of the currently, low-skilled social groups that need to be specifically targeted by proposed adult learning initiatives, along with other groups that lag behind, such as early school leavers, young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), as well as people with disabilities and older adults. Adult learning is also considered as a vital field of action for strengthening social inclusion and the active participation for groups that are deemed to be disadvantaged and at risk of poverty and social

exclusion, and in this regard, migrants are specifically mentioned again along with the Roma and other so-called ‘disadvantaged groups’ (Council of the European Union [CEU], 2011).

In terms of specific policy measures, the agenda raises the importance of ‘improving access’ to adult learning programmes for migrants as well as for Roma and other disadvantaged groups, while a final specific reference is made for the significance of providing adult learning opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum, especially concerning host country-language learning courses. (CEU, 2011)

### *Policies on adult education and migration in European countries*

The EU agenda on adult learning establishes a policy framework of minimum convergence and standards, striving to push for a common ground in the midst of accented differentiations amongst the existing policy approaches of member states (Rasmussen, 2014 and Milana, 2012). From this perspective, the limited engagement of the EU agenda on adult education with migrant learners and the challenges posed by migration purposely avoids to tackle some of the more sensitive and contested political issues; primarily, it does not engage with what has been termed as the ‘integration debate’ (Ager & Strang, 2008) and with the policy discourse on ‘intercultural education’.

The nexus between adult education, migration, and integration is indeed complex, forming a field of intense political debates that touch upon larger issues and disputes on the orientation and goals of European education systems, as well as the rise of nationalism and racism within the European space. Since their early formation in the early 2000s, the European policies on integration have consistently highlighted the central role of education, and adult education in particular, in the integration process of migrants in European host societies (Faas, Hajisoteriou, & Angelides, 2014, and Pujolar, 2010). ). Policies addressing this nexus have been formed in all European states, albeit with a lack of a common vision, pace, or political orientation (Faas, Hajisoteriou, & Angelides, 2014).

The current state of play in terms of the directions that these policies are taking across Europe is indeed diversified, shaped by different political experiences and political agendas, as well as unequal migratory flows towards the member states. For the purposes of this article, it would be helpful to attempt to briefly give an overview of this intense diversification by locating current policy trends in Europe along three axes.

The first axis spans from a narrow to a wide conceptualisation of integration in the design and implementation of adult education policies. The **narrow approach on integration** has

prompted policies where adult education for migrants tends to be restricted to provisions for learning the host society's language. Other types of policy interventions on facilitating the active participation of migrants in the educational process or on designing other types of targeted education programs that could potentially enhance the integration of adult migrants are relatively absent. This narrow policy approach is also associated with a state policy framework that is characterised by a low level of mainstreaming of integration in other policy areas, such as employment, housing, welfare, social inclusion and so on. Examples of these policies can be located in countries such as Poland and Lithuania among others (MEDBALT project, 2015). The **wider policy approach** on integration is reflected in policies on adult education and migration, which target specifically migrant learners as a group of concern and cases where specific policy measures and initiatives are put in place for promoting the equal access of migrants to adult learning structures, for establishing incentives that can increase the migrants' participation rates, for a wide provision of adult education programs (their current focus is on VET, digital literacy, civic education, etc) that meet the potentially distinct needs of the adult migrant population. The wider approach is also associated with a high-level mainstreaming of integration policies in other relevant policy areas. These policy approaches on integration have been developed in countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Germany among others, especially during the 2010s (Scholten, Collett, & Petrovic, 2017 and Carrera, 2016).

The second axis ranges from policies that have adopted **an obligatory** and, at times, **coercive model** to those **abiding to the voluntary and self-directed principles of adult learning**. The coercive approach has put in place a policy nexus where migrants' participation in adult education programs and successful learning outcomes have become a prerequisite for the enjoyment of social, economic, and political rights, such as the attainment or renewal of legal residence status, the right to welfare assistance and so on. The education programs, which fall under these schemes are predominantly associated with language learning and civic education, while educational outcomes are assessed via so-called language, 'knowledge of society' or 'integration' tests (Council of Europe, 2014a). Non-compliance, usually referring to the non-participation of migrants in these programs, or poor learning outcomes are directly associated with a system of penalties, which can reach up to deportation. Examples of state policies that have applied this model in slightly differentiated forms and at varying degrees can be found among others in Germany, the Netherlands and France (Joppke, 2007 and Simon & Beaujeu, 2018). The **voluntary and self-directed approach**, respects the main principles of adult education (Knowles, 1975), without establishing any discrimination on the participation

of migrants as non-citizens. This approach, in the cases where adult education is shaped by a wider conceptualisation of integration, has given rise to the development of adult education policies that attempt to increase the participation of migrants, enhancing their motivations and tackling possible barriers, while they can also embrace measures that aim at strengthening role of migrants as co-designers of adult education programs. Examples of policies on adult education in European states that have adopted this approach can be located in Ireland and Sweden among others (Extramiana & Van Avermaet, 2011, and Vink, 2016).

The third axis spans from adult education policies that adopt a **monocultural to those embracing an intercultural approach on integration**, at least to some extent. The monocultural approach integrates migration and migrant adult learners within a fixed system of hierarchies where the local culture and language dominance is unnegotiable (Hajisoteriou et. al., 2015). Adult education policies shaped by this **monocultural approach** might display, in some instances, assimilation tendencies, **seeking the migrant learner's adjustment to local culture and values**. In other cases, **the monocultural approach might be the basis of a relatively absence of adult education policies that address migrant learners and migration**; giving rise to a policy framework where adult migrant are left to their own devices without serious consideration on ensuring their equal access or promoting their participation in adult education and training. There are currently no state-wide policies on adult education in Europe that can be termed as entirely monocultural, however, countries such as Denmark and **Cyprus** are characterised by strong tendencies of monoculturalism (Horst & Gitz-Johansen, 2010 and Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013).

The intercultural approach purports to address the challenges of migrant mobilities by embracing the goals of equity and inclusion in adult education, while it encourages the empowerment of migrant learners and suggests concrete initiatives and measures for countering segregation, discrimination and racism (Coulby, 2006). Adult education policies that incorporate the intercultural approach tend to give emphasis to the adaptation or transformation of pedagogical approaches and curricula in directions that promote these educational goals, to the provision of education programs that stimulate intercultural interactions within a framework of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, and to the provision of professional training of adult educators on intercultural competences. Finally, through this intercultural approach on integration, adult education is considered as an open, dynamic system, which is open to transformations from the two sided-process of integration that is driven by interactions amongst migrants and native learners. There are currently no state-wide policies on adult education in Europe that have adopted a comprehensive intercultural

framework. In several countries, however, we can observe several policy initiatives promoting and experimenting with interculturality in adult education for migrants that are being designed and implemented at different levels in Sweden and Finland among others (Melo, 2013 and Halonen, Ihalainen, & Saarinen, 2014). It is also important, finally, to highlight the role of the Council of Europe's for pushing for an intercultural agenda in the European policies on adult education, mainly via its 'Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants' project (Council of Europe, 2014b).

The policies on adult education for migrants in Cyprus can be situated in this diverse field of policy approaches and differentiated implementations of the politics of integration for migrants on host societies across Europe. The next section of the article, after analysing the Cypriot context, will critically discuss adult education policies and practices in Cyprus in relation to the roles assigned to migration and to migrant learners as well as in respect to the policy approach on the question of integration.

## **The Cyprus case: political context and legal framework on migration and adult education**

### ***Migration and integration***

Cyprus is an island located in the Eastern Mediterranean, covering a total area of 9,251 sq. kilometres. According to the Statistical service (2018), the total population of the Republic of Cyprus in 2016 was 854.807. A former British colony, Cyprus became independent in 1960. Tensions between the Greek Cypriot majority and Turkish Cypriot minority came to a head in 1974 leading to an invasion by the Turkish army, the division of the island, and the massive relocation of Greek-Cypriots and other minorities (Armenians, Maronites, Latins) in the south, and of Turkish-Cypriots in the north. The article focuses on the southern part, the Republic of Cyprus. The latter recognises the Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots as the two major communities of the island. According to the Constitution, the Armenian, Maronite, and Latin minorities belong to the Greek-Cypriot community, while the Turkish-speaking Roma (Gypsies of Cyprus) are affiliated to the Turkish-Cypriot community (Gravani & Ioannidou, 2014).

Since 2004, when Cyprus entered the EU, an influx of people of other nationalities have migrated to the island. Indicatively, according to the latest Population Census in 2011, there are 170,383 non-citizens living in Cyprus, of whom 54% come from EU countries, and 46%

from non-EU countries. The five most common EU countries of birth for immigrants living in Cyprus are: Greece, UK, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. The largest non-EU groups in Cyprus are Filipinos, Russians, Sri Lankans and Vietnamese. The above groups are spread across all the Greek-Cypriot provinces (Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2011). Additionally, the last couple of years, the island has become a destination country for a growing number of refugees and asylum seekers from the troubled areas neighbouring it, such as Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Almost half of the 3.000 asylum applicants in 2016 were from Syria. Children with refugee or protected status are not recorded separately; however, one hundred and seventeen unaccompanied minors were accounted for in 2016 (EC, 2017, p. 5).

The legal framework that has been set up to regulate migrant flows dates from the British Colonial era: Law 13 of 1952, covering aspects of their residence, such as entry, stay, and departure. The main laws that regularise the residence of migrants and refugees in Greek Cypriot territory, following European and international standards, establish education as one of the basic rights of these populations. The Refugee Law (2000) stipulates, for instance, the right of all recognised refugees, under the same conditions as nationals, to “elementary education”, to the “full access of all minors to all levels of the education system”, and “the right to education, other than elementary education, especially as regards access to education, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas, and degrees, the remission of tuition fees, and the award of scholarships.” Additionally, the law introduces a specific provision for adult refugees, granting them the right to participate in “employment-related education opportunities, vocational training, and practical workplace experience.” Alternatively, the Law on Aliens and Immigration (2017) stresses the right to “equal treatment as nationals” for several categories of legalised immigrants (eg. holders of both Long-Term and Temporary Residence Permits and associated family members), in respect to “education and professional training”, while it states that their access to these services is conditional to the “proof of required language proficiency”, i.e. adequate knowledge of the Greek language.

Both laws remain, however, silent on the question of integration of migrant and refugee populations to Cypriot society, containing no relevant (in the case of the Aliens and Immigration Law), or minimal provisions (Refugee Law) and avoiding to make connection to how access and participation to the education system might improve the socio-economic opportunities of non-nationals. As Trimikliniotis & Demetriou underline (2015) the integration debate has been relatively marginal in Cypriot policies on migration; the term ‘integration’ only began to appear in official policy documents for the first time in 2007. Up to this time,



migrants were not even recognised as a group at risk of exclusion due to their temporary residence status (Hadjisoteriou & Angelides, 2013, p. 104). The absence of an integration policy framework till the 2010s appears to mirror the failure to develop a coherent migration policy. Rather, what had emerged from the late 1980's and early 1990's was a pragmatic state response to what were seen to be gaps in particular sectors within the local labour market which were to be temporarily filled by 'Foreign Workers' from Third Countries. This ad hoc response was predicated upon the assumption that migrants to Cyprus, under these circumstances, would only be admitted as temporary guests, thus the objective of securing integration was never considered as a critical goal under these circumstances (Officer & Taki, 2013)

The first 'Action Plan for the Integration of Third-country Nationals Legally Residing in Cyprus' was only launched during the 2010-2012 period aiming to address the objective of facilitating the integration of legal migrants, including Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2015). Recently, due to the increasing flow of migrants a new Action Plan for integration has been approved by the Council of Ministers covering the years 2014-2016 and targeting at: maximizing the benefits from legal migration by redefining the needs of the labour market; promoting the smoother integration of legal immigrants in the Cypriot society, and; managing situations where ghettos have been established (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2015). It is impossible to fully assess the impact of the implementation of these policy instruments for the integration of migrants since the action plans have lacked so far, any concrete monitoring or evaluation mechanisms (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2015). Other available indications, however, point to the critical shortcomings of these action plans and of their achievements: the lack of consultations with migrant communities at any stage of the action plans' drafting and implementation, their limited effectiveness in overcoming the existing obstacles faced by vulnerable groups of migrants for accessing the job market, and their inability to curb the growth of hate speech and racist violence against migrants (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance [ECRI], 2016). As a consequence, Cyprus has often been deemed as a country where "long-term integration" of migrants is actively discouraged (Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX], 2015).

Although education and Greek language learning have been designated as a priority area by these policy instruments, integration actions in the context of the above plans have been fragmentary, while relevant studies have revealed a significant gap between rhetoric and the educational realities of migrant learners at all educational levels (Hadjisoteriou & Angelides,

2017). Additionally, although a few steps have been taken for the development of regulations and educational programmes for migrants, there is still no national framework or a coherent plan that regulates and systematizes their education, and particularly the education of adult migrants or refugees. It is, finally, important to note that the embryonic policies on integration in Cyprus have been accompanied by the adoption of a discourse on intercultural education by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), which is confined to the levels of primary and secondary education. As other critical studies have already shown, however, the MoEC's adoption of interculturalism can be considered as at best half-hearted or even as a reflection of its ethnocentric approach to 'national education'. The Ministry has so far failed to even provide a concrete definition of intercultural education (Hajisoteriou, 2011 as cited in Hadjisoteriou & Angelides, 2013) while as Gregoriou (2010) has convincingly argued the MoEC's policies still adhere to monocultural notions of education, since policies conceptualise 'cultural difference' as an exclusive characteristic of migrant pupils rather than a process of intercultural interaction.

### ***Adult Education and Migration***

Cyprus' failure to formulate and implement effective paths to integration for non-nationals becomes even more acute in the realm of adult education through a critical analysis of the roles assigned to migration and to migrant learners by current state policies.

In Cyprus, all actions regarding the provision of adult and continuing education are legitimized by decisions of the Council of Ministers and/or Acts passed by the House of Representatives (Gravani & Ioannidou, 2014). The latter has recently established the National Committee for Lifelong Learning aiming at coordinating the implementation of the newly initiated National Lifelong Learning Strategy (NLLS) 2014-2020 that covers all forms and levels of education from pre-primary education to adult and continuing education and training, including links to the labour-market. The Committee consists of the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (DGEPCD), which has replaced the Planning Bureau (PB), the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), and the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC) (DGEPCD, n.d.)

The four priority axes in the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 that relate to adult education aim at:

- 1) promoting access and participation in lifelong learning for all, as well as recognition of learning outcomes;
- 2) improving the quality and efficiency of education and training,
- 3) promoting research and development for the support of lifelong learning,
- 4) promoting employability (integration/reintegration into the labour market) (DGEPCD, n.d.).

It is worth emphasising that this National Strategy, articulated in a long 50-page text, contains only two fleeting references to “immigrants” and “refugees”, respectively. Under the priority of promoting access and participation to lifelong learning, “immigrants” are identified as one of the groups that need be provided with “equal opportunities”, along with all those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special needs. No additional policy actions or measures are foreseen, however, by the National Strategy for pursuing this goal when it comes to improving access and the participation of adult migrants. A second reference included in this policy text is associated to the provision of free Greek language courses by state-run Adult Education Centres, whereby “political refugees” are named as the principal beneficiaries along with Turkish Cypriots and children of repatriated Greek Cypriots (DGEPCD, n.d.).

Indeed, these deficiencies of this National Lifelong Learning Strategy reflect the adoption of an extremely narrow approach to the integration of adult migrants in Cyprus. Adult migrants are not targeted as a group of concern by Cyprus’ policies on lifelong learning. No specific policy measures and initiatives have been put in place for promoting equal access of migrants to adult learning structures, while there are very little incentives for migrants’ participation. As a result, and with a few exceptions, there are currently no adult education programmes especially designed for migrants in Cyprus.

One crucial factor that can help us explain this policy lacuna relates to the structural and institutional impediments that shape the field of adult education in the country. The absence of a comprehensive and cohesive state policy on adult migrant education also reflects, in other words, the lack of a well organised and functioning adult education field in itself. As Gravani & Ioannidou (2014) have revealed in their research the contemporary policy framework for adult and continuing Education in Cyprus is marred by fragmentation and confusion. In this they underline the significant demand for systematization in the area and for the development of a coherent, national framework for monitoring adult learning and education, while they

criticise the haphazardness of the existing legal framework that currently regulates the planning, organization, design and implementation of adult education activities.

There are, for instance, a number of legislative provisions related to the different public authorities involved in providing formal, non-formal adult education, and vocational education and training. These authorities include: the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), and the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC). The dispersion of adult education programmes under different departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture and other bodies (HRDA, MOEC), in the absence of an Adult Education Department and coordinating mechanisms, does not allow for a common approach on establishing priorities and standards nor it ensures the high quality of the programmes provided.

The above authorities organize and offer a wide array of state funded education programmes for adults in Cyprus by a variety of education providers. As a result, flexible learning programmes for adults are offered by the five evening Gymnasias and Evening Technical Schools in Nicosia and Limassol, the post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training, the Open University of Cyprus, the Mediterranean Institute of Management and the higher Education Institutions (both public and private). In addition, there are institutions and organizations offering non-formal adult education such as the: Adult Education Centres, 41 State Institutes of Further Education, the Pedagogical Institute, Private Institutes registered with the Ministry of Education. Vocational education and training is offered by the: Cyprus Productivity Centre, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, afternoon and evening classes at the post-secondary vocational education and training institutes, in-company courses funded by the Human Resource Development Authority (Gravani & Ioannidou, 2014). These education providers lack in many cases the expertise and even experience in adult learning, while the ensuing structural fragmentation and lack of coordination has contributed to the crystallisation of a state of affairs where there is no systematised monitoring and assessment for most of these adult education courses and extremely limited provisions and opportunities for the professional development of the adult educators involved in these programs. (Gravani & Ioannidou, 2014).

The adult and continuing education system in Cyprus lacks comprehensive monitoring mechanisms through which qualitative and quantitative data on provision, participation, dropout rates, accreditation and learning outcomes can be obtained. The only recent and

reliable statistical data compiled by Eurostat are indicative of the afflictions faced by adult education in Cyprus: adult participation in learning in Cyprus remains well below the EU average of 10.0%. In 2016 the figure was 6.9% decreasing from 7.5% in 2015 (EC, 2017). Similar, detailed data on the participation rates for migrants in the above adult learning programmes across the country are not available. However, existing assessments are quite dire in this respect, claiming in one instance that “hardly any working-age non-EU citizens in CY can benefit from training” (MIPEX, 2015).

The absence of a comprehensive and cohesive state policy on adult migrant education in Cyprus should not be, however, interpreted as a policy of exclusion. Adult migrants may not form a focal group of concern in relation to policies for promoting equity and learning, but they are still entitled to participate in general education and training based on the principles of equal treatment and of equal educational opportunities in relation to nationals: all education programmes offered to adults are, in effect, available for migrants as well without any open discriminations between nationals and non-nationals. Still, one critical point to consider, here, is that since adequate Greek language proficiency is a prerequisite for accessing almost all of the above programmes -with a few exceptions, such as Greek language courses for adults- as a result, it can be easily understood that in reality the majority of the above programmes are not accessible to migrants or refugees, even if they are professed to be.

Cyprus adult education policies can be considered, along these lines, as characterized by strong tendencies of monoculturalism. This monocultural approach is not associated with the adoption of any assimilationist measures; adult migrants are not actively invited or even coerced to adapt to national cultures and norms via their participation in education and training. Instead, the relatively absence of adult education policies that address migrant learners and migration gives rise to a policy framework where adult migrant are left to their own devices without serious consideration on ensuring their equal access or promoting their participation in adult education and training.

This accusation of “monoculturalism” against the adult education system in Cyprus has been even voiced by official bodies such as the Cyprus Ombudsman who has noted that although education should be seen as “a crucial factor for the integration of migrants and the promotion of pluralism...language learning opportunities for adult immigrants” remain extremely limited in the island (2013, p. 2). Even though, the nexus among migration, adult education and integration in Cyprus is a largely unexplored area in social research (United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018), the few studies who have addressed the issue concur with this view.

Recent policy reports on the living conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers in Cyprus have criticized the very low frequency and variety of educational activities offered to adult learners of these social groups. They, moreover, reveal that most of these activities are haphazard and organized by “non-governmental actors, such as NGOs, voluntary organisations and individual volunteers” (Asylum Information Database [AIDA], 2017, p. 66). In terms of state-run initiatives, the reports find that there is an absence of any dedicated Vocational and Educational Training programmes for asylum-seekers, which poses a major obstacle for these populations “from accessing the main services necessary to reach even a basic standard of living” (UNHCR, 2018, p. 13), while there is only a provision of Greek language classes that are offered to adult asylum-seekers and refugees twice a week by the Ministry of Education (AIDA, 2017, p. 66). Finally, a recent study on language education in Limassol concludes that current educational initiatives can by no means be considered as adequate or efficient in addressing the needs of adult migrant learners, while the language programmes that are on offer are “solely oriented towards the learning of the local national language and fail to reflect the attributes of bilingual education or plurilingual instruction” (Nicolaou et. al., 2016, p. 182).

Indeed, there have been several formal, but mostly ad hoc initiatives that have promoted Greek language learning for adult migrants in recent years in Cyprus; essentially, these are the only adult education programs that have directly targeted adult migrant learners, while professing, at times, that they have been designed for meeting their specific educational needs. Their results and real impact have been, however dubious, especially if we take into account the views of migrants themselves who, even after completing these courses, they still consider that the language barrier presents one of the principal obstacles that hinders their integration, especially in accessing the labour market and social services (Cyprus Gender Research Centre [EKIF], 2011; Officer & Taki, 2013). It would thus be helpful to dedicate the final part of this section with some brief reflections on the most systematic contemporary efforts for promoting Greek language learning for non-native populations offered by the principal state provider of adult education programs in the island, i.e. Adult Education Centres. Adult Education Centres, which operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus (MoEC), offer adult education programmes that are open to everyone for participation – including migrants and refugees. As described by the MoEC the programme:

*provides general adult education in Cyprus within the framework of providing lifelong learning opportunities. The main objective of the Adult Education Centres is the general development of each adult's personality as well as the social, financial and cultural development of citizens and society in general. Their aims coincide with the government's developmental policy and the wider aims of the MoEC regarding the provision of "Lifelong Learning" opportunities for all the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and the combating of educational inequalities so that citizens, including adult migrants, may be successfully integrated and be enabled to act efficiently in a united Europe<sup>1</sup>.*

The Adult Education Centres (AEC) offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as well as on teaching professional and vocational skills. Furthermore, every year the Adult Education Centres organise free of charge learning activities for various target groups, such as people with literacy difficulties, people with special needs, enclaved Cypriots, prisoners, mentally ill and elderly people. They also offer, free of charge, Greek language courses to children of repatriated Cypriots, to political refugees, migrants and to Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, Turkish language courses are offered free of charge to Greek Cypriots (Gravani & Ioannidou, 2014).

An assessment of the operation of the AEC conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation in Cyprus, between 2009 and 2011, revealed the need to improve a) the in-service training provision of the adult teaching staff b) the educational process and c) the management of the institution (Chinas, 2016). The above are also confirmed by our latest research study in an adult education centre in Cyprus regarding the use of learner-centred education in Greek language courses for migrants (Hatzopoulos, 2018). Findings of the study revealed the lack of a specialised training and professional development for the adult educators teaching the courses; the lack of an organised and coherent framework regarding the aims, objectives, expected outcomes of the courses, teaching methodologies adopted, as well as the lack of an organised assessment framework. The above are not unrelated to absence of a central coordinating body, for instance a specialised department in Adult Education in the Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant information is taken from <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html>

Education and Culture (MoEC); the dispersion of adult education programmes under different departments of the MoEC, that do not always have the expertise. For instance the AEC operate under the supervision of the Department of Primary Education, and; the fragmentation of provisions, of the restructurings made and developments planned. The aforementioned have as a consequence the absence of any special provisions for adult migrants in terms of curriculum and pedagogical approaches followed. In our latest research regarding the extent to which learner centred education (LCE) is included as a pedagogical approach in existing policies on Adult Education in Cyprus, in general and in the education of adult migrants, particularly, we found out that there are no explicit references of it to the curriculum used in the adult education programmes nor the pedagogic approach used; however, elements of the LCE approach can be implicitly found in the practices used by some adult educators who place the adult migrant learner at the centre of their educational practice.

## **Conclusion**

The critical analysis of relevant policies that was attempted in this article has shown that adult education in Cyprus is not inclusive and that it does not facilitate the learning needs of the entire population of the island, and in particular these of adult migrant learners. On the one hand, existing policies on the integration of adult migrants are very narrow and weak, without specific and comprehensive educational provisions that can enable and facilitate their inclusion to Cypriot society. On the other, the adult education system in Cyprus is essentially monocultural; the growing presence of a non-native adult population has not acted up to now as the driving force for challenging the predominance of ethnocentric educational policies and for opening up a serious policy debate for the adoption of multilingual and intercultural pedagogies. All recent policy attempts by the state authorities to recognize and come to terms with the migrants' presence through fleeting references to the adoption of an intercultural model of education, instead of being accompanied by concrete measures, they can be seen as more illustrative of the striking gap between policy rhetoric and adult educational practice.

The discussion has also highlighted the connections between the lack of educational opportunities faced by adult migrants in the island with some critical weaknesses of the adult education system in Cyprus: the institutional fragmentation of policy actors and adult education providers, the educational reforms adopted, which can be attributed to the absence of a Department of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education and Culture. The lack of policy



coordination leads to contradictions in decisions and reforms, causes delays in the implementation of reforms and hinders the exchange of information and data, as well as the systematisation of efforts in the field of adult education and as a further consequence has also hindered debate and efforts towards engaging with the diverse educational needs of adult migrant learners.

This article has, finally, alluded to an alternative approach to integration and its inherent connection with adult education for migrants. Through this perspective, integration can be seen as a two-way process in which migrants and the host community adapt to each other. If we see integration as a two-way street, then adult education can play an important role by supporting adults of all communities in better understanding their own internal, hidden culture and the contrasts and possible tensions between that and other cultures in their community.

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